

[Letter from Woody Guthrie to Victor, ca. June 17, 1942]

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WAR SONGS ARE WORK SONGS By Woody Guthrie

The Victor Recording Co., Mr. R. P. Weatherald ,

Dear Mr. Weatherald:

In these days of a war to the death against fascism, when our whole nation is buckling down to the job of working and fighting the greatest war that ever come over the face of the whole world, I feel of the notion that war songs are work songs and hit a lot harder than empty slogans, zippy rhymes, etc., such as has mostly been the tone of the radio and phonograph up to this time.

I would like to make arrangements with you to take an audition of your own selection of the songs enclosed in this letter. I can't read music notes as you know, but I could play them over and show you how the tunes go.

I hear you are not able to put out as many records as before, due to shortage of materials or priorities, but if recording is cut down, I think it ought to be the cocktail numbers and not the songs about jackhammers and diesel engines and saws and axes and sledges that build our railroads. There aint no better way to get more work out of anybody than to tell them how proud you are of the work they already done, and the working folks that I've met didn't build America in a sissy tone of voice such as the nickel machines are full of.

I'm writing a novel under contract for the E.P. Dutton Publishing Co., Inc. N.Y. City, and it will be a lot about my traveling and singing. In a way, this should increase the sale of the dust bowl ballads, and a natural step now to take would be to release an album or two of

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songs titled 'War Songs are Work Songs'. Could you hear an audition of these as soon as possible?

Thank you,

Woody Guthrie 148 West 14 Street New York City, N.Y.